



LALLA ESSAYDI

KASHYA HILDEBRAND

THE DANGEROUS FRONTIER | 24 APRIL - 5 JUNE, 2015

COVER IMAGE

Bullets Revisited #27B (detail), 2014 | chromogenic print | 121.9 x 152.4 cm

“The physical harem is the dangerous frontier where sacred law and pleasure collide.... My harem is based on the historical reality; rather than the artistic images of the West – an idyllic, lustful dream of sexually available women, uninhibited by the moral constraints of 19th Century Europe.” - Lalla Essaydi, 2010

Kashya Hildebrand is pleased to announce Moroccan photographer Lalla Essaydi's second exhibition with the gallery in London. Where Essaydi's 2013 show served as a retrospective spanning five major bodies of work from 2003 to 2012, *The Dangerous Frontier* (24 April – 5 June 2015) focuses on new works created in the last year as part of her *Bullets Revisited* series. Essaydi's photographs are the result of a complex performance-based medium comprising painting, calligraphy, interior design, costume design, stage directing, and finally photography. This meticulous process of image making is crucial to Essaydi's oeuvre. The uncropped white borders of the film with the Kodak brand made visible emphasise that she fabricated her settings and identities, mocking the Orientalists' invented fantasy scenes, yet hers are based on historical, social, and cultural facts.

Throughout her work, Essaydi uses henna painting, using it to write intricate calligraphic text over every available surface – from the models themselves to their clothing and even the walls themselves. This henna painting comes to elaborately conceal the uncovered parts of the female bodies and in this sense assumes an allegorical dimension: even their bare skin becomes her canvas as she covers their ankles, legs, arms, wrists and faces in row upon row of tight script. What is key here is that the art of calligraphy itself is traditionally a male-dominated realm, yet Essaydi takes it and uses it with the ultra-feminine medium of henna dye (used by women to create decorative patterns for special occasions such as weddings). “By reclaiming the rich tradition of calligraphy and interweaving it with the traditionally female art of henna,” she explains, “I have been able to express, and yet, in another sense, dissolve the contradictions I have encountered in my culture: between hierarchy and fluidity, between public and private space, between the richness and the confining aspects of Islamic traditions.”

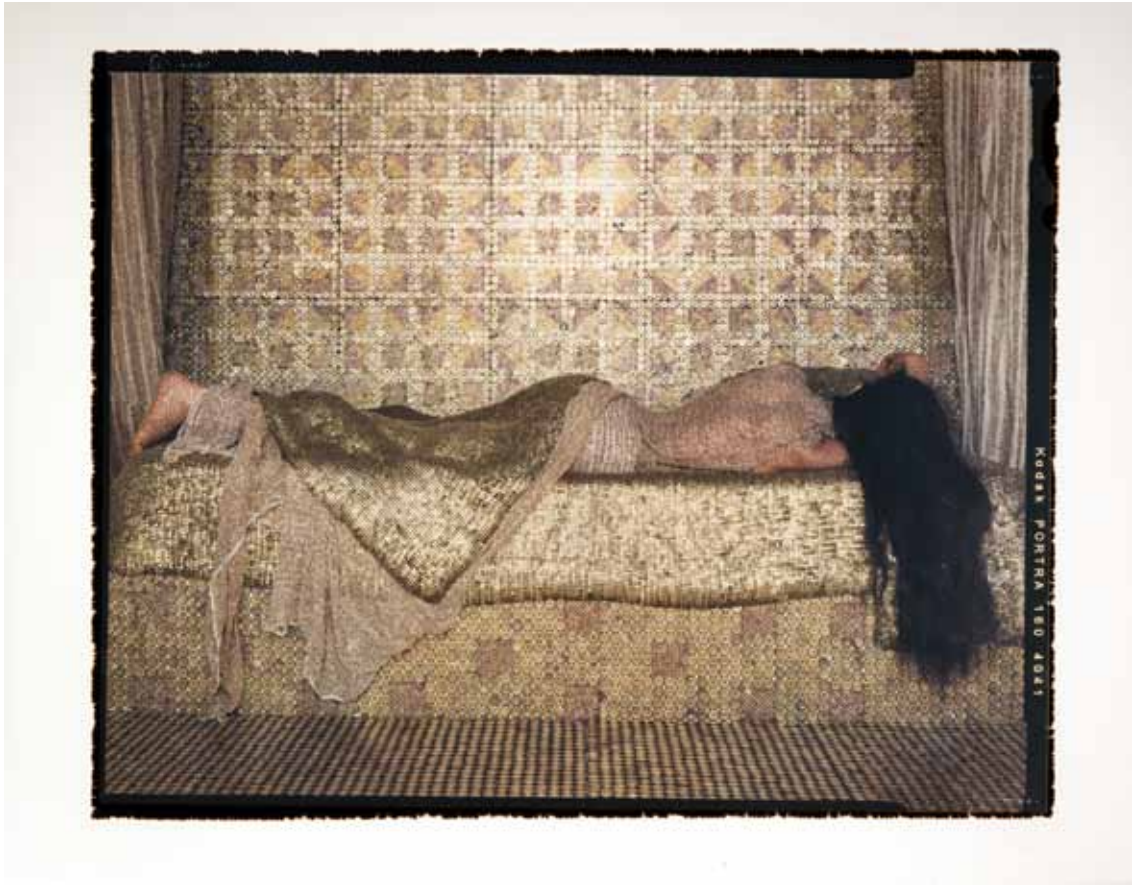
In her *Bullets* [and *Bullets Revisited*] series, Essaydi takes her creativity to another level, not only through the

assiduous labour involved in the production of these photographs but also through the powerful imagery she presents. The models and their surroundings are elegantly adorned with sparkling golden fabrics and metallic materials, giving an impression of shimmering luxury. Upon closer inspection, it is the military juxtapositions of carefully cut and polished bullet casings that build up these glamorous trompe l'oeil images. Despite this apparent blinding beauty, where ammunition is even hand sewn on the models' clothes, jewels, and beds, Essaydi uses the bullet as a disturbing metaphor for the hidden violence endured by women in some Islamic cultures.

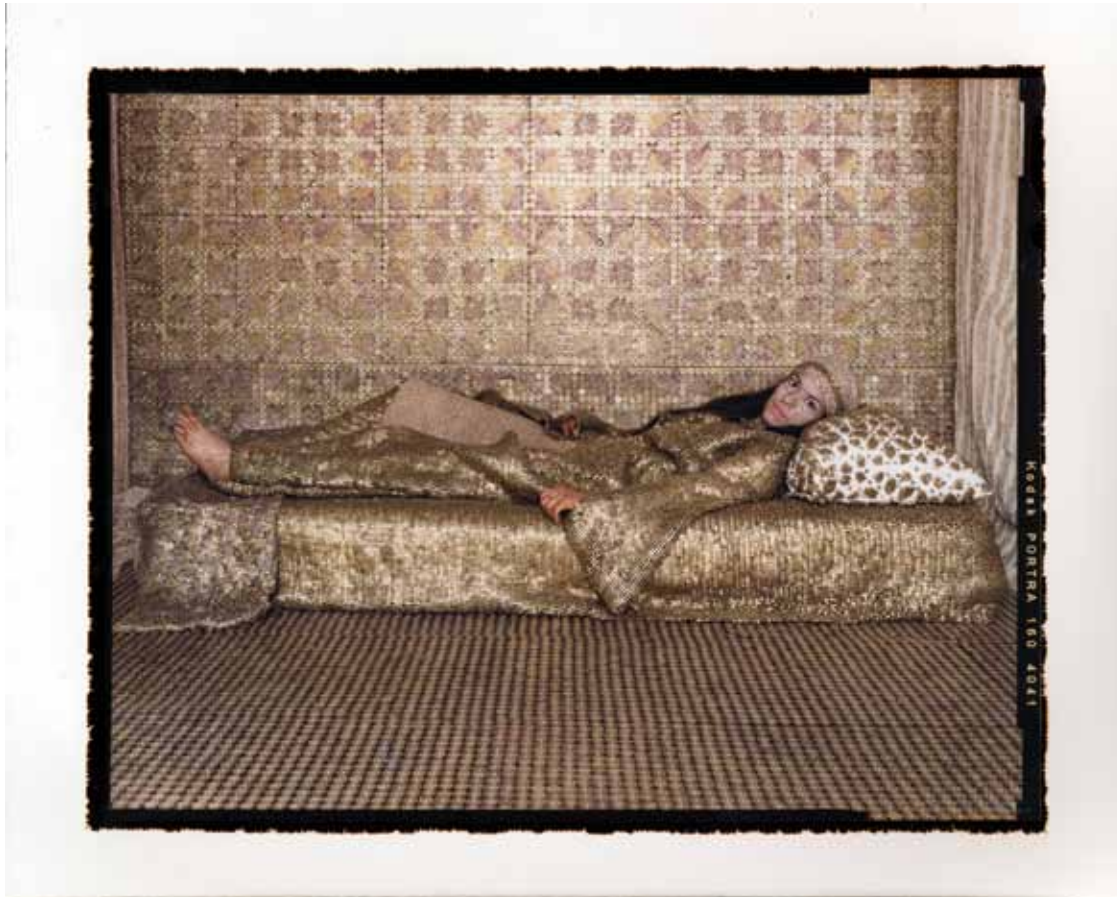
At the same time, Essaydi's models are depicted as femmes fatales, equipped with threatening weapons with which they shield themselves against Western voyeurism and male domination. The coldness of the bullets' brass conveys a feeling of uneasiness and rejects the warm colours and ambiance found in Orientalist paintings. The *Bullets* settings reproduce more faithfully Orientalist harems' décor, yet transform these domestic spaces into psychological ones, tormented by violence. Talking about Orientalism, Essaydi stated

that "beauty is quite dangerous, as it lures the viewer into accepting the fantasy" yet she subverts the danger of beauty in her *Bullets* series by seducing the viewer in a much more perilous world, that of war and destruction raging through contemporary society with the Arab Spring.

- Includes text abstracted from Lalla Essaydi: *Crossing Boundaries, Bridging Cultures* (ACR Edition, 2015)



Bullets Revisited #27B, 2014 | chromogenic print | 121.9 x 152.4 cm



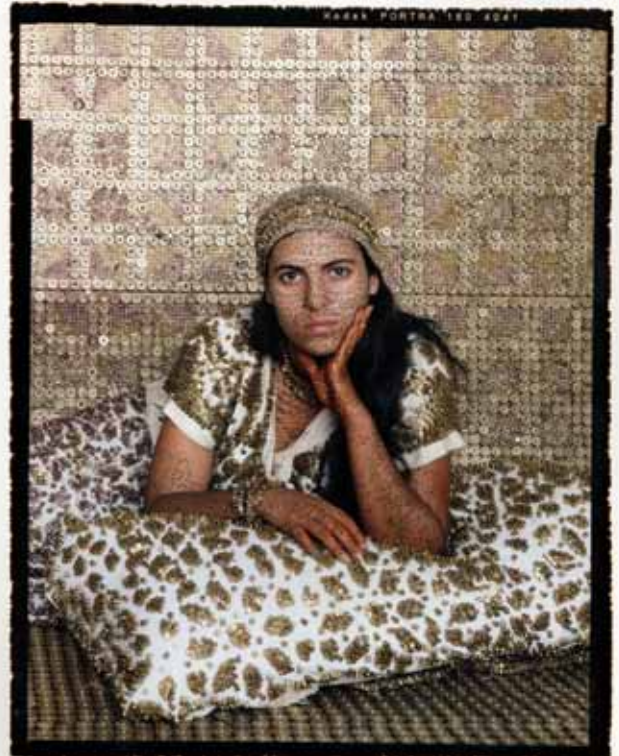
Bullets Revisited #29, 2014 | chromogenic print | 121.9 x 152.4 cm



Bullets Revisited #30, 2014 | chromogenic print | 121.9 x 152.4 cm



Bullets Revisited #33, 2014 | diptych | chromogenic print | 101.6x76.2 cm each



Bullets Revisited #34, 2014 | diptych | chromogenic print | 101.6x76.2 cm each



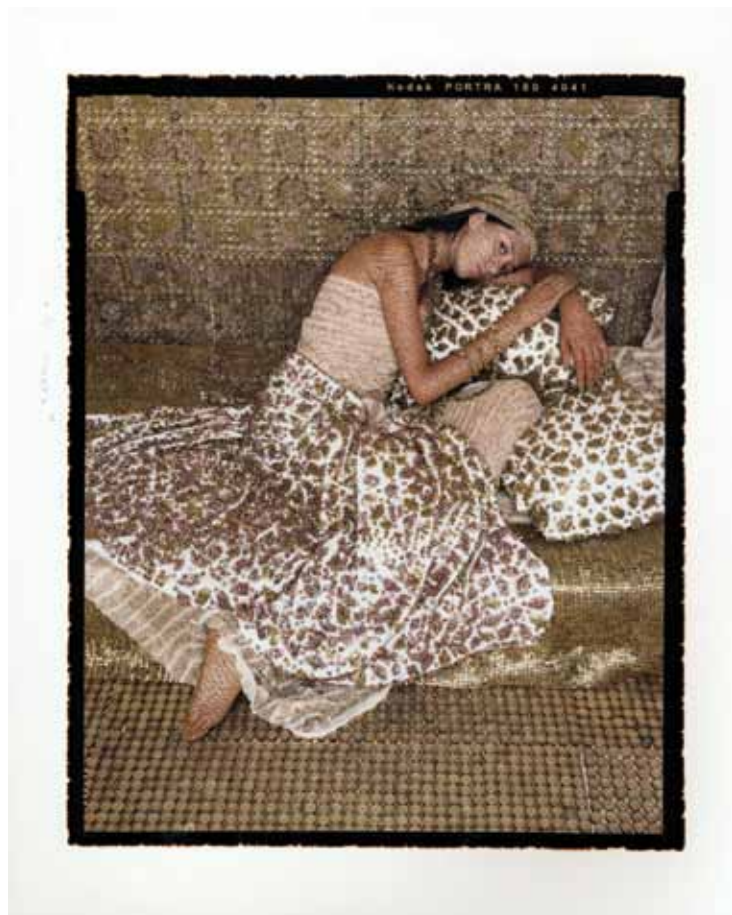
Bullets Revisited #36, 2014 | chromogenic print | 152.4x121.9 cm



Bullets Revisited #37, 2014 | chromogenic print | 152.4x121.9 cm



Bullets Revisited #38, 2014 | chromogenic print | 121.9x152.4 cm



Bullets Revisited #41, 2014 | chromogenic print | 152.4x121.9 cm



Bullets Revisited #44, 2014 | chromogenic print | 152.4x121.9 cm

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Morocco in 1956
Lives and works in New York

EDUCATION

- 2003 M.F.A., School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA
1999 Diploma in Photography and Installation, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
B.F.A., Tufts University, Medford, MA
1990-91 Curriculum in Painting and Continuing Education, L'Ecole Des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France



TRAINING & INSTRUCTION

Oumaima Soobarah, Painting, 2 1/2 years
Raveti Kapoor, Basic Art Techniques, 18 months
Garrett Gabrielson, Painting & Drawing, 1 year

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *The Dangerous Frontier*, Kashya Hildebrand, London, UK
Lalla Essaydi, Edwyn Houk Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland
2014 *Lalla Essaydi: Writing the Self, Writing Others*, Bahrain National Museum, Manama, Bahrain
2013 *Beyond Beauty*, Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, London, UK
Lalla Essaydi: Beyond Time and Beauty, Museum of Modern Art, Baku, Azerbaijan
2012 *Lalla Essaydi: Revisions, a Retrospective*, Smithsonian African Museum of Art, Washington D.C.
2011 *Harem*, Jackson Fine Art Gallery, Atlanta, GA
Lalla Essaydi: Power of Writing, National Gallery, Tanger, Morocco
2010 *Les Femmes du Maroc*, Longyear Museum of Anthropology, Colgate University, NY, USA

- 2009 *Aftermath*, The 25th Alexandria Biennial for
Mediterranean Countries Representing
Morocco. Cairo, Egypt
Les Femmes du Maroc, Sultan Gallery, Kuwait
- 2008 *Lalla Essaydi: Crossroads*, Waterhouse & Dodd gallery,
London, England
Indelible: The Photographs of Lalla Essaydi, First Center
for the Visual Arts, Nashville, TN, USA
- 2007 *Les Femmes du Maroc*, Edwynn Houk Gallery,
New York, NY, USA
- 2006 *Converging Territories*, The New Britain Museum of Art,
New Britain, CT, USA
Converging Territories, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston,
TX, USA
- 2005 *Converging Territories*, Columbus Museum of Art,
Columbus, OH, USA
- 2004 Lalla A. Essaydi, Schneider Gallery, Chicago, USA
- 2003 *Converging Territories*, Howard Yezerski Gallery, Boston,
USA
- 2002 Invitational Show, Karsh Photography Exhibition, MFA
- 2001 Photography Show, Schneider Gallery, Chicago, USA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Islamic Art Now: Contemporary Art of the Middle East*,
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA,
USA
Shared Reality, Tampere Art Museum and Backlight
2014 Photo Festival, Tampere, Finland
*She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran
and the Arab World*, Iris & B Gerald Canto Center
for the Visual Arts at Stanford University, Stanford,
CA, USA as well as The Carnegie Museum of Art,
Pittsburgh, PA, USA
- 2014 The World Bank Art Program, Washington DC, USA
*VIEW FROM INSIDE: Contemporary Arab Video,
Photography and Mixed Media Art*, FotoFest 2014
Biennial, Houston, TX, USA
*She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran
and the Arab World*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA,
USA
- 2012 *In Her Eyes: Women Behind and in Front of the Camera*,
Newark Museum, NJ
Les Femmes du Magreb, Orientalist Museum, Doha, Qatar
- 2011 *Stargazers: Elizabeth Catlett In conversation With 21
Contemporary Artists*, Bronx Museum,
New York, NY, USA

- 2010 *Art of Today*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA
- 2009 *Transitions: Painting at the (other) End of Art*. The Moramotti collection of Contemporary Art, painting show, Emilia, Italy
- Decoding Identity: I Do It for My People*, Museum of The African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 2008 *Black Womanhood: Images, Icons, and Ideologies of the African Body*, The Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, NH, USA
- Girls on the Verge: Portraits of Adolescence*, Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, IL, USA
- 2007 *Contemporary, Cool and Collected*, Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC, USA
- The Silk Road and Beyond: Travel, Trade, and Transformation*, Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, USA
- 2006 *Les Femmes du Maroc*, Schneider Gallery, Chicago, USA
- 2005 *About Face: Photographic Portraits from the Collection*, Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, USA
- 2004 *8th International Photography Gathering*, Le Pont Gallery, Aleppo Syria
- 2002 *The Boit*, Grossman Gallery, The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Christian Dior Couture
 Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, MA
 Jordan National Museum of Art, Jordan
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LA
 Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Qatar
 The British National Museum, London, UK
 The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
 The Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA
 The Fries Museum, The Netherlands
 The Hearst Corporation, New York, NY
 The Louvre, Paris, France
 The Lowe Art Museum, Miami, FL
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
 The RISD Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

